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Indian and Northern Affairs, Canada

NUTRITIONAL POLICY COMMITTEE: May 30, 1977 Afternoon Session

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NUTRITIONAL POLICY COMMITTEE

May 30, 1977 Afternoon Session

Dr. Michael Stiles, University of Alberta, Faculty of Home Economics, spoke about "Food Availability through the Northern Distribution System - Trends affecting the Nutritional Environment". See notes.

Comments

Dr. Stiles suggests that the more we involve Hudson's Bay Company at as high a level as possible the more likely it will be possible to make foods available - even to pricing low sugar items at less than high sugar content items.

Discussion followed on the cost, policy for merchants on pricing and the allowances made for 50% spoilage on fresh fruit and vegetables. Oranges and apples in one northern community cost as much as 60 cents each.

An example was given of one co-op manager who decided not to sell pop. As a result he lost all his customers and had to sell carbonated drinks in order to sell his goods. The high consumption of carbonated drinks was discussed and banning it from a community required the combined efforts of all those involved, particularly the people in the community itself.

Dr. Schaefer talked of the private enterprise in the north that buys and sells native food which began 2 1/2 years ago at an opportune time when employment dropped in the area and more men went hunting.

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Comparisons were made between the % of income spent on food in the southern parts of Canada and the north. Subsidizing food was favoured as long as not every kind of food was included to the same degree.

Dr. Stiles emphasized the need for combined efforts to bring about changes - that changing prices would not change tastes. There is a need to give people information - education through advertising and stressing the positive. The need to communicate with regional and head office of the HBC was reiterated - let them know the dissatisfactions.

It was noted during visits to HBC stores in the north and through discussions with the manager that there was a willingness to order what the people wanted but that Indian people don't demand it.

Dr. Stiles stated that consumerism does not have a single voice - the store manager does not get a clear directive from consumers. Also it was stated that nutritionists, educators and others can come in with specific requests and support stores so it will sell - there is a need for education. Many foods come in by barge - it is important that requests be made early - at least a year before changes can be expected.

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Dr. Spittle emphasized the need for combined efforts to bring about changes - that changing prices would not change costs. There is a need to give people information - education through advertising and arranging the positive. The need to communicate with regional and head offices of the NAC was reiterated - let them know the disadvantages.

It was noted during visits to NAC stores in the north and through discussions with the managers that there was a willingness to make what was possible known to that further people study demand, etc.

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